

# OTTER CHATTER NEWSLETTER



Spring, 2016

Landscaping with Tennessee's native plants celebrates our states rich natural history. It also creates a more diverse landscape that is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also ecologically valuable to the land. Native plants often contribute to the health and the restoration of an ecosystem. Using native plants that are able to sustain themselves naturally, especially in urban settings, places fewer demands on resources such as lawn mowing and fertilizers. A native plant is a species that occurs naturally within a region; indigenous. An exotic plant is a species that has been introduced by humans, either deliberately or accidentally; alien, non-native. Many exotics are harmless, but there are others that pose serious threats to biodiversity. Exotics can invade natural plant communities and take over the natural plants habitat, causing the natives to die off. Some exotics are vectors for disease and exotic insects. We can prevent future exotics from spreading by using native species.

Using native species promotes our natural heritage. Each landscape is unique and aesthetically pleasing. Many areas of Tennessee seem to look the same because of such overuse of exotics; this has created a sort of monotonous and predictable landscape that can be avoided simply by planting Tennessee's beautiful native plants. When you do decide to landscape with native plants, match the right plants with the right site conditions. Visit a state park or natural area near your home to see what natives they are using, then find a nursery that propagates its own plants (this just means the nursery grows all of its plants in their greenhouses or on their land) A great website to visit is the Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council, <http://www.se-eppc.org>. There you will find a whole section dedicated to landscaping with native plants in Tennessee.

#### **Benefits of using native plants include:**

- Less maintenance and are cost-effective
- Natives are hardy and withstand extreme winter temperatures so they do dieback
- Environmentally friendly, so they require fewer pesticides and fertilizers
- They provide food and shelter for wildlife

Native plants go a long way to help sustain native wildlife populations such as butterflies, moths, birds, reptiles, and mammals. Beautiful birds come through Tennessee in the fall that are migrating and love the high-energy fruits from dogwoods and spicebush trees. Oak trees attract insects which all native wildlife love to eat. American holly provides winter shelter and food. These are just a few of several native plants that help sustain our wildlife friends. Everything living, including us, benefits from using native plants in our yards.

## **Spring Programs**

Please call the Wilderness Station at  
(615) 217-3017 to register.

**Bird Club:** March 12th-Nickajack Wetlands. March 31st—Wilderness Station. April 23rd—Cason Ln. Trailhead. 9 a.m. Ages 6+. Free

**Audubon ADVENTURES!** Wednesdays, March 9th, 16th, 23rd. 1-2 p.m. Saturdays, March 12th, 19th, 26th. 9-10 a.m. Ages 8-11. \$3/child **Registration Required.**

**Signs of Spring Wildflower Hike:** Tuesdays, March 15th, April 12th, 26th. 10am—12pm. Adult. \$15/person. **Registration Required**

**NatureScapes and Wildlife Portraits:** Saturday, March 26th. 10 a.m.—12 p.m. \$15/person. Adults. **Registration Required**

**Chocolate Hike:** Saturday, March 26th. 2:30 p.m. Ages 8+. \$3/person. **Registration Required**

**Spring Break Fun Day:** Tuesday, March 29th. 10 a.m.—1 p.m. **Registration Required.**

**Naturalist in Training:** Saturdays, April 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd. 9—11 a.m. Ages 10-12. \$20/child.

**Nature Journaling:** Saturday, April 30th. 9—11 a.m. Adults. \$15/person. **Registration Required**

**Turtle Searches:** Tuesdays, April 28th, May 3rd, 10th, 17th. 3:30 p.m. Nickajack Wetlands. Ages 8+. Free.

## **Weekly Programs**

**Wild Things:** Every Wednesday. 9:30—10:15 a.m. Ages 1-4. \$3/child. **Registration Required.**

**Tales & Trails:** Every Wednesday. 10:30—11:15 a.m. Ages 4-7. \$3/child. **Registration Required.**